

News Release

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Kofi Annan Joins World Leaders and NGOs to Announce \$20 Million for Protecting Coral Reefs and Island Resources

Governments, private groups launch multinational strategy to protect threatened island resources

PORT LOUIS, Mauritius – UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the President of the Seychelles and the Vice President of Palau were joined by other world leaders and private organizations today to announce bold new financial commitments to conserve coral reefs and preserve the livelihoods of island communities.

Pledges of over \$20 million were made by governments and non-governmental organizations, including \$2 million from The Nature Conservancy, to support networks of marine protected areas in small island developing states around the world. The funding will enable the island states to turn political commitments into action on the ground to increase the resilience of natural systems and generate jobs, income and food security today and for future generations.

“We have a vision. We have agreed goals,” Annan said. “What we need is high level political commitment for marine conservation and protected areas.” The Secretary General assured the island states that “the United Nations system shares [their] strong devotion to this effort.”

This historic financial commitment to island conservation is an important step in reaching an overarching goal established in February 2004 at a United Nations conference on biological diversity to create effectively managed and ecologically-representative national and regional systems of protected areas on land by 2010 and at sea by 2012.

Joining in today’s announcement were ministers from Belize, Fiji, the Bahamas and France who pledged significant resources to build effective systems of marine protected areas that will allow both humans and the natural environment to thrive. The Nature Conservancy is investing \$2 million to support the implementation of marine and coastal protected area networks in island countries. These networks can replenish fish stocks, create new sources of livelihood and buffer against the adverse impacts of global warming. The Conservancy currently has conservation projects on islands in North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific.

“Islands are flush with an incredible array of plant and animal diversity,” said Steve McCormick, president and chief executive officer of The Nature Conservancy. “But, they are also incredibly

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threatened. This unprecedented, multinational agreement is a major step in ensuring that these precious places and the communities that depend on them will continue to flourish for generations to come.”

Islands and their surrounding waters cover one-sixth of the world's surface and provide habitat for more than half of the Earth's diversity of marine plants and animals. They are home to an astonishingly high ratio of endemic species – plants and animals found no place else in the world – and contain more endangered, rare and threatened species than anywhere else. Islands and their coastal areas are also a critical source of food, jobs and income for millions of people – more than 600 million people live on the more than 100,000 islands around the globe.

“Healthy marine and coastal resources are an essential foundation for sustainable development in island countries,” said Joy Grant, director of Global Partnerships for The Nature Conservancy, who spoke at the event. “With this \$2 million, The Nature Conservancy hopes to catalyze additional resources from donor agencies and other partners for this critical work.”

The event took place on the island nation of Mauritius – once the home of the now-extinct Dodo – as part of a United Nations conference on the future of small island nations worldwide. The event was hosted by the governments of Seychelles and the United Kingdom, as well as the International Coral Reef Action Network, International Coral Reef Initiative, The Nature Conservancy, Rare and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at nature.org.